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Pineywoods Native Plant Center, May 2005

SFA Gardens, Stephen F. Austin State University

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up effort began right away – cheerful Barb Stump leading the way.

Dorothy Wisely presents gift in honor of her mother, Ruby M. Mize to be used to develop the Azalea Garden. SFA agrees to provide full-time position to provide care and maintainance for the garden.

March 27: Dedication of the SFA Native Plants Center – an SFA Mast Arboretum/Forest Resources Institute cooperative venture – 100+ attendees.

First Bugs, Butterflies, and Blossoms Festival held in cooperation with Keep Nacogdoches Beautiful and SFA Department of Elementary Education.

Children’s Garden Pavilion has received the 1999 “Excellence in Wood Design” award for an institution in Texas from the Texas Forestry Association.

Dec 3: GRA and our Arboretum Research Associate, Dawn Parish passed MS Agriculture orals, graduated December 1999.

2000

April 8: Grand opening of the SFA PNPC and the Dedication of the Lady Bird Johnson Demonstration Garden. Board of Regents present and other notables present. Lady Bird Johnson in fine form, good time by all. Press, publicity, good feelings. Arthur Temple inspired.

April 9: Dedication of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden – Dottie Wisely recognized under the red/white tent – beautiful day.

2001

April 24: Barbara Stump, MS Thesis defense, “Site analysis and design of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.” Passed with flying colors and a PhD quality product.

First Cullowhee Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference; multi-day conference, dorm assignments, 243 registrants with all but 20 from outside of Nacogdoches. Bus tours of East Texas. Two luncheon banquets. One social. A Saturday night bar-b-que and dance. Great success.

October 22: Elyce Rodewald’s first day as “Educational Programs Coordinator,” a full-time position partly funded by a Texas Forest Services grant, part by Arboretum Account - we have no idea how many children will soon be invading the garden.

2002

Canna and Banana trial planted south of the shade garden in old compost pile. Growth is phenomenal.

Cut flower trials take over the vegetable garden adding beauty and butterflies to the landscape.

2003

75 elementary and high school teachers attend environmental education field day.

May 28 – June 2: Cullowhee Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference – five buses for field trips, 4 banquets, 18 speakers, plant sale, dance – exhausted staff. 200 registrants.

First Appreciation Banquet honors SFA Mast Arboretum Volunteers for thousands of hours of service donated to the garden and educational programs.

First Fall Fandango Party held for Arboretum members.

2004

Over 10,000 people participate in educational programs at the SFA Mast Arboretum and Pineywoods Native Plant Center

Daylily Garden fountain renovated by Nathan Unclebach.

Ginger beds expanded and renovation turns bog garden into a bamboo forest.

Construction on Children’s Garden water feature and Phase II renovation begins.

Over 6500 taxa represented in the garden.

July 12: Jack, the Arboretum’s Corpse Flower, *Amorphophallus titanum*, amazes the entire world by sending up a flower, first ever in Texas. Corm that grew the flower was 26 lbs in April when it was repotted, and it was four years with us at that time. The final height was 61 inches. Weeklong TV, newspapers, and radio interviews everywhere. 15-second spot talk-over on CNN and I understand we made the Fox Banner for about a minute or two probably.

2005

Keep planning and planting for the future!



SFA Mast
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Creech Visits Giant
Montezuma Cypress

By Dr. David Creech

Well, I can now retire! I’ve just seen, touched and photographed the Arbole de Tule, the giant Montezuma cypress in the valley of Oaxaca, Mexico. During a vacation in Oaxaca city in early March, Janet and I enjoyed a little time in the shadow of the big fellow. Yes, it’s huge. Amazing, in fact. I would say foreboding. The Arbole de Tule is the big one, perhaps the largest tree in the world, depending on how you measure these craggy patriarchs.

Located in Sta. Maria del Tule, a small peaceful village with a life built around the tree and the church it shades. El Arbol rises to 140’, and looms over the bell tower of the church of Our Lady built by the Spanish over 400 years ago.

“Ahuehuete O Sabino” is a little over 140 feet tall, and most amazing, the tree boasts an astounding 190 feet in circumference. Now, I haven’t discovered just exactly how this was calculated because the tree footprint would be really confusing to measure, best described as convoluted ellipse. The maximum diameter is reported as 46’, and the wood in this tree



is estimated at over 630 tons! As for age, the tree remains an enigma. While reports of 2800-3500 years old are in the literature, the most recent estimates are less. Most agree that the tree is over 2000 years old.

One interesting side note, in 1994, the cypress failed to leaf out properly and appeared to be dying. Because the tree and the church is the landmark for the village, a great effort was implemented to help the tree. Consultants from as far away as Kew England flew in and a conclusion was quickly reached. This giant Montezuma cypress was thirsty and there was too much foot traffic under the tree.

The tree lies in what was once more marshland than it is today. The tree was watered more frequently and heavy foot traffic to the base of the tree was eliminated by the construction of a viewing fence. Gardeners were brought in to care for the tree. The tree recovered. Dead limbs were cut away and the tree appears ready for another few centuries. As one might suspect, the gardeners of this tree have made a fine little side business selling

seeds and seedlings of the tree to the local population and others interested in the progeny of this amazing tree – an interesting dispersal of Taxodium genes in this amazing valley and the world beyond the mountain.

Blooms, Blooms, and More Blooms: Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden Update

By Barbara Stump

This year our bloom sequence in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden really showed why it is a good idea to plant many different cultivars from many different hybrid groups.

The azalea bloom began with the Chinese Huangs the second week of March. The beautiful scarlet red Huang



1-6-31 caused quite a stir on every tour, as it was totally covered with little hose-within-hose flowers that stayed until the end of March. According to Buddy Lee,

Azalea Society of America President and Encore azalea breeder, Huang 1-6-31 is an excellent candidate for a selective breeding program.

Our favorite lavender azalea is the purple spider azalea, *Rhododendron* ‘Koromo Shikibu.’ It was a crescendo of blooms beginning in late February but decided to go to seed by month’s end. Those hot days of 75- and 80-degree weather in March caused our stand-by Southern Indicas like lavender ‘George Lindley Taber’ and bright purple ‘Red Formosa’ to bloom fast and fade fast.



As of April 5, our deciduous magnolia ‘Yellow Bird’ finally flowered at the entrance to the garden, flanked by pink ‘Illusions’ azaleas. As of April 26, there were still large groups of azaleas blooming, notably the coral flowers of ‘Kaempferi 6811’, ‘Ben Morrison’, and a number Robin Hill hybrids. These hybrids were developed by Robert Gartrell to produce hardy shrubs that have large flowers. Several lovely examples still

blooming in the garden are the double (hose-in-hose) flowers of ‘Nancy of Robinhill’ by the entrance to the Council Ring, the large flowers of ‘Watchet’ also leading into the Council Ring, and the very large flowers (up to 4 inches across) of ‘Robin Hill Gillie.’

One of my personal favorites, ‘Ben Morrison’ put on an incredible show in late April, nearly covering the shady section of Bed 3 with red and white flowers that look a bit like star-gazer lilies. Now that we are in May, most of our azaleas have earned a rest, but the Satsuki in Beds 4 and 17 are just beginning. Come visit the Japanese maples and the hydrangeas this summer.



We continue to plant new varieties in the garden, thanks to the generosity of friends with the Ozark Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. Elepidote Rhododendrons from Keith Johansson’s growing operation, Metro Maples in Fort Worth are being trialed in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. These will be a challenge to grow here with our summer heat, but we are planting them high in a shady area of the garden, adding extra peat moss, and will take great care of them. While this type of rhododendron can grow to 30 feet tall up north, we expect these to stay under six feet tall for the next 10 years here.

Meadows Foundation Grant Benefits Educational Programs at Arboretum and Pineywoods Native Plant Center

Stephen F. Austin State University has received a grant worth up to \$107,000 from The Meadows Foundation of Dallas. The grant will benefit SFA's Pineywoods Native Plant Center, as well as East Texas school students and teachers.

The university will use the funding to train 75 East Texas-area teachers each year for the next two years to use inquiry-based environmental science teaching and will provide field-based science instruction to 7,700 school-aged children in the first year. In the second year of the grant, instruction will be provided to 8,500 children.

Through the Meadows Foundation grant, the

Pineywoods Native Plant Center and the SFA Mast Arboretum will seek to provide hands-on, outdoor activities to improve the science literacy of school students and their teachers.

"These activities will allow students to become actively engaged in asking questions, seeking solutions, designing investigations, and then asking new questions," said Elyce Rodewald, education coordinator of the plant center and arboretum. "Students involved in inquiry learning are encouraged to cultivate problem-solving skills by developing an understanding of how to make observations, collect and analyze information, synthesize information, and draw conclusions."

Grant funds will also be used at the native plant center, located at 2900 Raguet St., to complete site plans and pre-design work for an indoor environmental education center and, by Sept. 30, 2006, to complete an additional two miles of walking trails.

The university has received \$77,000 in funding for the first year of the grant, according to Dr. Jerry Holbert, vice president for university advancement.

"Funding for the second-year is \$30,000 and must be matched dollar-for-dollar in new donations to the university specifically designated for the project," Holbert said. "This grant will enable SFA to greatly enhance and expand its environmental education program. Literally thousands of children in East Texas will benefit from the generous support of The Meadows Foundation."

The Meadows Foundation is a private philanthropic institution established in 1948 by Algur H. and Virginia Meadows to benefit the people of Texas. The foundation's mission is to assist the people and institutions of Texas improve the quality and circumstances of life for themselves and future generations. Foundation grants support work in the fields of arts and culture, civic and public affairs, education, health and human services.



Students from Lufkin Middle School learn about East Texas ecosystems with Elyce Rodewald, Education Coordinator at the PNPC and Mast Arboretum.

Photo by Hardy Meredith.

Remember

When? The SFA Mast Arboretum Grows and Prospers 1996-Present

1996

Arboretum receives endowment dedicated to general operating support from long-time Arboretum supporters, A.T. and Pat Mast, Jr.

SFA Horticulture gets a line in the budget and first full-time Arboretum employee is hired.

Magnolia collection planted on slope behind Physical Plant and new border installed along the Agriculture/Art parking lot.

1997

Arboretum named a satellite garden of the Hardy Fern Foundation, primarily through the work of volunteer Roger Hughes.

Garden Gala Day crowd estimated at 1500. New red and white tent a hit. Lydia Harber does flamenco dancing, Wynn Logan and the Golden Dreamers Band performs, Bill Welch, Greg Grant, and Dave Creech give tours and lectures. Circus-like atmosphere.

Cheryl Boyette leads fund-raising efforts for Children’s Garden Pavilion.

Arboretum purchases first tractor and ‘gator.

1998

3200 taxa represented in the garden.

Work begins on the Azalea Garden.

Timber-frame pavilion built by the Timber Framers Guild of North America in the Children’s Garden.

November 12: Dedication of the SFA Mast Arboretum. Rain forced it into the Coliseum - about 100 in attendance - plus the third floor of the Austin building and a number of Regents. Unveiling of the sign. A.T. and Pat plant a Japanese maple and an azalea. Photo-op.

December 5: The great all-Nacogdoches Azalea garden plant out. Civic groups and individuals working to plant azaleas and more azaleas. 50+ volunteers total during the day, some for a few hours, some for all day.

1999

January 29: Brute of a flood – lost couple of hundred plants only from azalea garden – Massive clean

(continued on page 4)